



MONTANA FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

THE **OUTSIDE** IS IN US ALL.

Meeting Date: June 8, 2023

Agenda Item: Jefferson River and Closure Rule (R3)

Action Needed: Final

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 5 minutes

Background: In May 2023, the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) notified FWP of its intention to replace the Meridian Bridge on the Jefferson River near the town of Willow Creek (river mile 14.9). MDT's contractor, Stahly Engineering (Stahly), has requested a section of the Jefferson River be closed to recreational use from July 12 to July 18 while Stahly sets new concrete beams.

The new design will not alter flow of the Jefferson River and will enable more efficient and safer passage for wider vehicles. There is not expected to be a long-term impact to the river or recreational use. Stahly will install signage notifying the public of the project and closure at the following upstream Fishing Access Sites (FAS): (1) Sappington Bridge FAS, (2) Drouiliard FAS.

Public Involvement Process & Results: Because FWP was not notified of the need for closure until Spring 2023, no public comment has been taken.

Alternatives & Analysis: The commission could choose not to approve the temporary closure of the river during construction. Without this option, emergency conditions will likely precipitate adoption of an emergency rule to close the river and/or access sites. FWP would prefer earlier adoption to enhance public notice and safety.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale: FWP recommends that the commission approve the closure as proposed. The closure would allow FWP to ensure proper signage at impacted FAS, and increase public awareness of the project ahead of time.

Proposed Motion: I move the commission to authorize a temporary closure of the Jefferson River from the Sappington Bridge FAS to the Drouiliard FAS, to all recreational floating and vessel use from July 12 to July 18, 2023.